



April 2016

COUNTERTERRORISM

DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-368](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has undertaken several efforts, including DOD's Global Train and Equip program, to build the capacity of its foreign partners to counter terrorism. Funding allocated for this program totals \$2.3 billion since 2009. DOD and State select projects from proposals that use a standard planning template. Once projects are approved by DOD with concurrence from State, DOD submits congressional notifications that summarize certain aspects of each project.

The fiscal year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act included a provision for GAO to review the Global Train and Equip Program. This report examines (1) the extent to which DOD considered and documented consideration of key security assistance elements for fiscal year 2015 project proposals, and (2) the results that have been reported on the achievement of project objectives since fiscal year 2009. GAO analyzed agency data and program documents, and interviewed DOD and State officials in Washington, D.C., and at selected combatant commands and embassies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations to enhance DOD's documentation and management of the Global Train and Equip program and one to ensure timely completion of required assessment reporting to Congress. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-16-368](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or JohnsonCM@gao.gov.

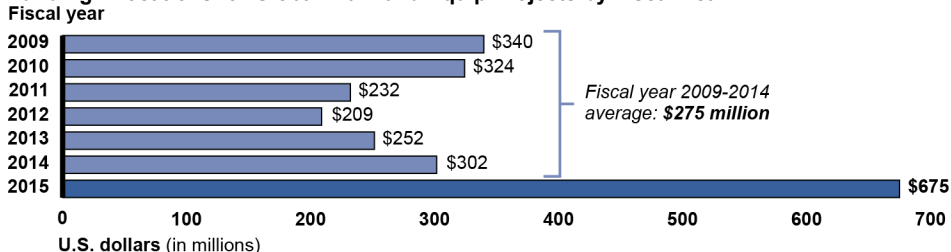
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DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program

What GAO Found

Funding Allocations for Global Train and Equip Projects by Fiscal Year



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-16-368

The Departments of Defense (DOD) and State (State) officials consistently considered four key security assistance project planning elements for fiscal year 2015 Global Train and Equip project proposals. However, project proposals did not always adhere to federal internal control standards for clearly documenting three of those elements—absorptive capacity, project assessment, and sustainment plans. For example, DOD did not require project proposal packages to document information about the recipient unit's absorptive capacity. In addition, assessments of recipient unit baseline capabilities did not always include all information required by agency guidance to facilitate project assessment. Lastly, 13 of 54 project proposals did not include required estimates of annual sustainment costs. The sharp increase in funding for program activities in fiscal year 2015, as shown in the figure above, heightens the importance of documenting consideration of key planning elements to provide decision makers sufficient information about recipient units' ability to use and sustain assistance. Moreover, incomplete baseline assessments may limit DOD's ability to conduct project assessments to inform future funding decisions.

DOD's Consideration and Documentation of Key Security Assistance Planning Elements for Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train and Equip Projects

Project objectives	Absorptive capacity	Baseline assessments	Sustainment plans

Considered and documented Considered and >50% documented Considered and <25% documented

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents. | GAO-16-368

DOD reporting on Global Train and Equip project assessments has not met statutory deadlines but identifies some progress in building partner nation capabilities. Despite a legal requirement to complete and submit to Congress annual assessments within 90 days of the end of each fiscal year, DOD's fiscal year 2013, 2014, and 2015 assessment reports were submitted up to 21 months late. Untimely reporting may limit decision makers' ability to use assessments to inform future project selection and sustainment decisions. DOD's assessments—which cover 28 percent of funds allocated in fiscal years 2006 through 2013—indicate some progress in building capability to combat terrorism and conduct stability operations. They also identify factors that challenge the achievement of project objectives such as proposal design and interpretation and equipment delivery and procurement. For example, one country received sniper spotting scopes that were too tall for use in a prone position, exposing the spotter.

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Abbreviations

CTPF	Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund
DOD	Department of Defense
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PPD 23	Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance
SOF	Special Operations Force
SO/LIC	Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict
State	Department of State

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April 18, 2016

Congressional Committees

Terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and al Qaeda and its affiliates threaten the national security of the United States and its partners. The United States has long recognized that the diversity and complexity of threats to our national interest require a collaborative approach, both within the U.S. government and among allies, partners, and multilateral organizations. A goal of U.S. security assistance policy, as detailed in *Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance* (PPD 23) is to help partner nations build sustainable capacity to address challenges such as transnational threats.¹ Programs to build foreign partner capacity can help partners confront extremists before such threats require U.S. military intervention.

The United States has undertaken several efforts, including the Department of Defense's (DOD) Global Train and Equip program, to build the capacity of its foreign partners to counter terrorism. Congress originally authorized a temporary program in fiscal year 2006 and permanently authorized the program in fiscal year 2015.² Since 2009, DOD has allocated about \$2.3 billion through the program to train and equip partner nation security forces in its efforts to counter terrorism and support certain military and stability operations.

The fiscal year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a provision for GAO to conduct biennial audits of programs conducted pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2282 for the Global Train and Equip program. This report examines (1) the extent to which DOD considered and

¹The White House, *Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance* (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 5, 2013).

²The Global Train and Equip program has previously been called the "Section 1206" program, as it was originally authorized in section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006; see Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1206, 119 Stat. 3456, Jan. 6, 2006. The Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 authorized a permanent program codified at 10 U.S.C. § 2282, and the program is now often referred to as "Section 2282." See Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1205(a)(1), 128 Stat. 3533, Dec. 19, 2014. This report covers periods of time during which both "Section 1206" and "Section 2282" were common nomenclature. We will refer to the program throughout as the Global Train and Equip program (or "the program").

documented consideration of key security assistance planning elements for fiscal year 2015 project proposals and (2) the results that have been reported on the achievement of project objectives since fiscal year 2009.

To address these objectives, we analyzed program guidelines, project proposal documents, congressional notifications, and fiscal year 2009 through 2015 funding data, including allocations, obligations, and disbursements. We discussed the project proposal process and key elements of project planning, documentation, and assessment with officials from the Departments of State (State) and Defense, relevant geographic combatant commands,³ and U.S. embassies in Kenya, Jordan, and Latvia. We selected these countries based on factors such as the amount of funds the countries have been allocated, the maturity of projects, project assessment experience, and geographic distribution. To assess the extent to which DOD considered and documented consideration of key elements of security sector assistance for projects DOD planned to implement in fiscal year 2015, we reviewed PPD 23, which identified four key elements to be considered for security sector assistance programs. To determine the extent to which DOD considered these elements, we interviewed State and DOD officials who develop and review proposals and reviewed congressional notifications developed subsequent to agency approval to determine the extent to which those documents include—and thus imply consideration of—information about the four key planning elements. To determine the extent to which DOD requested documentation about and fully documented consideration of these elements, we analyzed the content of agency guidance and agency-approved fiscal year 2015 project proposals for their inclusion. To review the results that DOD has reported on the achievement of project objectives since fiscal year 2009, we analyzed DOD's assessment reports from fiscal years 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. Specifically, we compared original baseline recipient unit capability and performance levels assessed at the time the projects were proposed with recipient unit capability and performance levels assessed following the delivery of program assistance. We also compared submission dates for each assessment report to statutory deadlines and reviewed the assessment reports to identify factors affecting the extent to which project objectives

³The six geographic combatant commands are the U.S. Africa Command, the U.S. Central Command, the U.S. European Command, the U.S. Pacific Command, the U.S. Northern Command, and the U.S. Southern Command. Partner nations in the areas of responsibility of the first four commands listed here received Global Train and Equip assistance in fiscal year 2015.

were achieved. We assessed all data to be sufficiently reliable for the purpose of this engagement by taking steps such as comparing funding data to previously published information and interviewing cognizant agency officials about funding data and project assessments. However, we did not systematically validate the results included in DOD's assessment reports. For more detail on our scope and methodology, see appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2015 to April 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Evolution and Codification of the Global Train and Equip Authority to Build Foreign Partner Capacity

DOD has used the Global Train and Equip program ("the program"), originally authorized under Section 1206 of the fiscal year 2006 NDAA and amended several times thereafter, to build the capacity of foreign military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations through the provision of training, equipment, and small-scale military construction activities.⁴ The fiscal year 2015 NDAA permanently authorized the Secretary of Defense, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, to conduct programs to (1) build the capacity of a foreign country's national military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations or participate in or support ongoing allied or coalition military or stability operations that benefit the national security interests of the United States, (2) build the capacity of a foreign country's national maritime or border security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations, and (3) build the capacity of a foreign country's national-level security forces that have among their

⁴Although the statutory language uses "program" to refer to individual assistance efforts, throughout this report, we generally use "project" to refer to individual assistance efforts as proposed, approved, implemented, and assessed, and "program" to refer to the entirety of the Global Train and Equip program.

functional responsibilities a counterterrorism mission in order for such forces to conduct counterterrorism operations.⁵

U.S. Security Assistance Policy

Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance, published in April 2013, was developed to strengthen the ability of the United States to help allied and partner nations build their own security capacity. The document identified principal goals of and guidelines for security sector assistance that highlight the importance of including the following elements in project design and execution:

- identifying objectives that address partner nation needs;
- considering partner nation absorptive capacity;
- integrating assessment, monitoring, and evaluation to provide policymakers, program managers, and implementers with information and evidence necessary to make effective decisions and maximize program outcomes; and
- anticipating sustainment needs.

DOD's interagency process for developing and reviewing project proposals, described in figure 1 below, incorporates these key elements.

Global Train and Equip Program Management and Project Planning

DOD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) is responsible for providing policy guidance and oversight of the Global Train and Equip program. During the reporting period covered by this review, SO/LIC coordinated with State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and other stakeholders in an interagency process to solicit project proposals annually, in accordance with guidelines and project proposal instructions that DOD revises each year to reflect lessons learned, congressional concerns, and other considerations.⁶ Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of

⁵10 U.S.C. § 2282. These programs may include the provision of equipment, supplies, training, defense services, and small-scale military construction, and must include elements that promote observance of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect for civilian control of the military.

⁶We will use "program" to refer to the entirety of the Global Train and Equip program; we use "project" to refer to individual assistance efforts as proposed, approved, implemented, and assessed.

this process, which included developing, reviewing, and selecting project proposals; notifying Congress; implementing and delivering assistance; and assessing project results. In practice, different elements of the proposal development, review, selection, and notification process occurred simultaneously as proposal submission and review occurred on a rolling basis and agency-approved projects were notified to Congress in multiple groups throughout each fiscal year.

Figure 1: Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train and Equip Project Proposal, Approval, and Implementation Process

Fiscal year 2014				Fiscal year 2015		Future years	
Proposal development	Proposal refinement and approval			Congressional notification	Implementation	Delivery	Assessment
Proposal development Geographic combatant commands and embassy officials use guidance issued by the Department of Defense (DOD) to develop project proposals for consideration in the next fiscal year	Strategic review The Departments of Defense and State vet, refine, and prioritize draft project proposals	Proposal submission deadline <i>August 1:</i> Geographic combatant commands and embassy staff submit fully developed project proposals to DOD	Proposal review and selection DOD and State review proposals and finalize project selection for agency approval	Congressional notification DOD submits a congressional notification for each approved project	Implementation and procurement Fifteen days following congressional notification, DOD finalizes security assistance agreements, and implementing agencies contract or requisition equipment or services specified in each proposal. Funds must be obligated by the end of the fiscal year in which they are appropriated	Delivery Delivery of equipment and training can begin as soon as implementation occurs and was generally planned to be completed within 24 months	Project assessment Six to 18 months after the delivery of major project components, DOD conducts an assessment of the effectiveness of the project in building the capacity of the partner nation

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense documents. | GAO-16-368

DOD and State officials reviewed proposals—approved by the geographic combatant command and ambassador or chief of mission—and selected projects to recommend to the Secretaries of Defense and State. Following approval by the Secretary of Defense, with concurrence from the Secretary of State, DOD prepared and submitted congressional notifications for each project it intended to fund through the program. These notifications summarized project information such as objectives, the absorptive capacity of the recipient unit, baseline capabilities of the recipient unit, and arrangements for the project’s sustainment. Congressional notifications were submitted for each project to the

appropriate congressional committees at least 15 days before initiation of activities.⁷ According to DOD, project implementation did not begin immediately following the 15-day notification period if additional time was needed to provide congressional briefings and ensure that the congressional committees agreed with proposed activities. Following congressional notification, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency assumed responsibility for overseeing the obligation of funds for training and equipment procurement before the end of the relevant fiscal year, while security assistance officers at U.S. embassies were responsible for coordinating in-country project implementation. Finally, DOD planned to conduct assessments of selected projects 6 to 18 months after the delivery of major project components, to evaluate the extent to which U.S. assistance had contributed to building recipient unit capabilities.

Funding for Global Train and Equip Projects

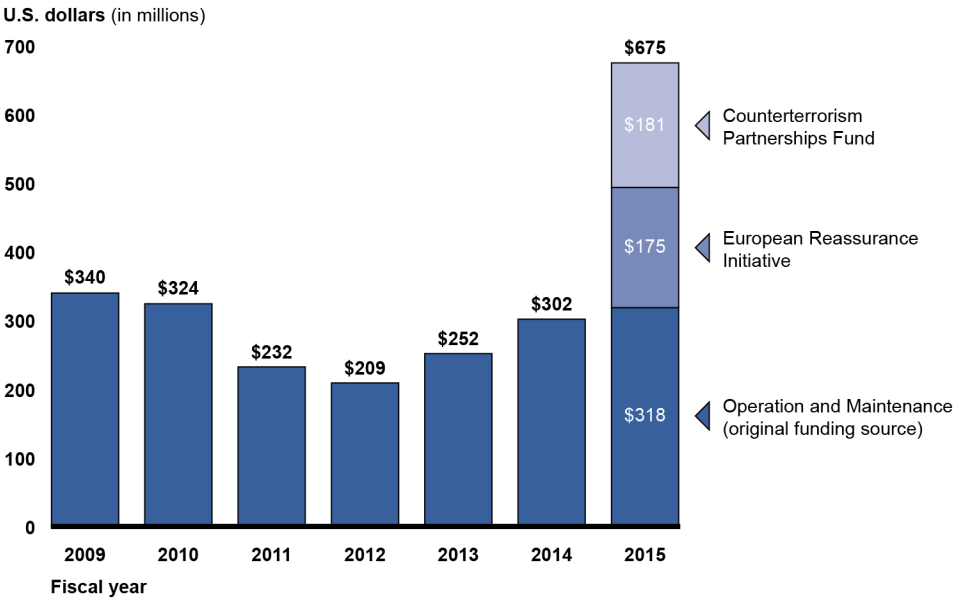
Allocations for activities to be implemented under the Global Train and Equip authority increased from an average of about \$275 million in fiscal years 2009 through 2014 to \$675 million in fiscal year 2015, as shown in figure 2. Allocations for fiscal year 2015 significantly increased with the creation of two funding transfer accounts: the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF) and European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), both of which were authorized to fund Global Train and Equip projects. The CTPF is authorized to provide assistance to foreign security forces to conduct, support, or facilitate counterterrorism and crisis response activities, and to improve the capacity of the U.S. military to provide enabling support to counterterrorism and crisis response activities undertaken by foreign security forces. Congress appropriated \$1.3 billion and \$1.1 billion for the CTPF in fiscal years 2015 and 2016, respectively.⁸ ERI funds were appropriated, in part, to provide training, equipment, logistical supplies, and other services to Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, and

⁷These committees include the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, and Foreign Relations and the House Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, and Foreign Affairs. Although not required by law to receive the committees' approval, according to DOD as a matter of comity, DOD waits to receive the committees' approval before implementing a project.

⁸According to DOD officials, not all CTPF funds will be obligated under the Global Train and Equip authority.

Lithuania.⁹ Funds were transferred from both the CTPF and ERI accounts to be obligated for fiscal year 2015 projects.

Figure 2: Funding Allocations by Source for Global Train and Equip Projects, Fiscal Year 2009-2015



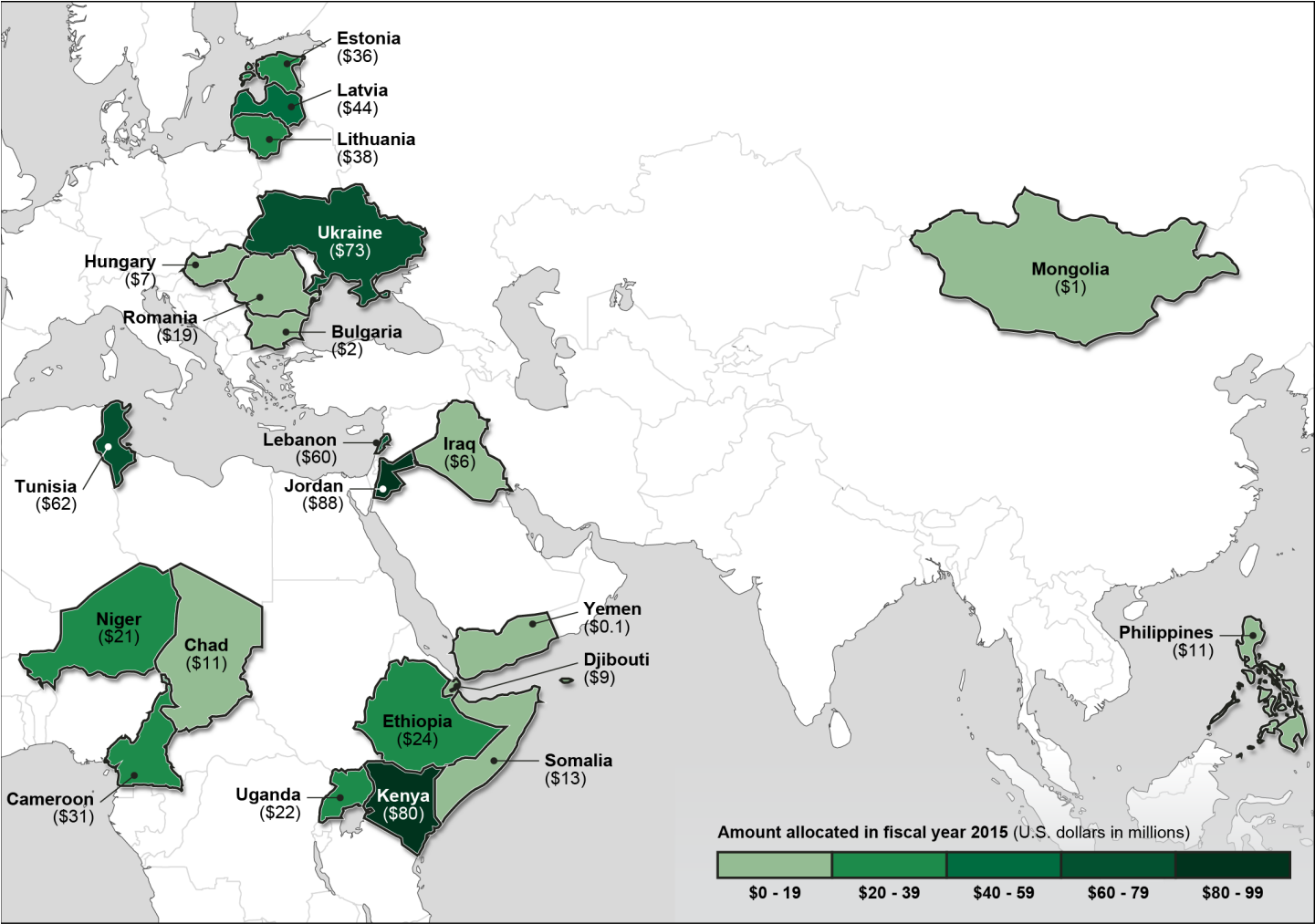
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-16-368

Notes: Fiscal year 2015 allocations do not sum to \$675 million because of rounding. The Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF) resources included here are a portion of the \$1.3 billion fiscal year 2015 appropriation available for obligation until September 30, 2016. Congress appropriated an additional \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 2016 CTPF funds that are available for obligation until September 30, 2017. The authorizations for the CTPF and European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) accounts require that CTPF and ERI funds be transferred to the Operation and Maintenance account before they are available for obligation for Global Train and Equip program activities.

⁹ERI is a broad initiative by DOD to reassure North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies and build the defense and security capacity of partner nations in Europe. The \$175 million in ERI transfer funds allocated for fiscal year 2015 Global Train and Equip projects was part of the nearly \$1 billion in funding provided to DOD in various appropriation accounts as part of this initiative for an increased U.S. military presence in Europe, additional bilateral and multilateral exercises and training with partners, improved infrastructure, enhanced prepositioning of U.S. equipment, and further efforts to build the capacity of newer members and allies.

As seen in figure 3, \$272 million of the \$675 million, or 40 percent, of funding for fiscal year 2015 was allocated to projects for partner nations in Africa.¹⁰ For more information regarding the distribution of fiscal year 2015 Global Train and Equip assistance, see appendix II.

Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Allocations for Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train and Equip Projects



Sources: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-16-368

¹⁰Allocations for countries in Africa noted in figure 3 do not sum to \$272 million because of rounding.

As of the end of fiscal year 2015, DOD had no unobligated balances for fiscal year 2009 through 2015 funds and had disbursed the majority of funds obligated in fiscal years 2009 through 2012, as detailed in table 1.¹¹ DOD has disbursed 10 percent of the funds obligated in fiscal year 2015 and has until the end of fiscal year 2020 to complete disbursement of those funds.

Table 1: Global Train and Equip Program Assistance, Fiscal Years 2009-2015

Dollars in millions								
Fiscal year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 ^c	Total
Allocations	\$340	\$324	\$232	\$209	\$252	\$302	\$675	\$2,333
Amounts reallocated ^a	\$3	\$25	\$19	\$9	\$8	\$9	\$24	\$98
Unobligated balances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unliquidated obligations	\$5 ^b	\$22 ^b	\$58	\$53	\$155	\$146	\$588	\$1,027
Disbursements	\$332	\$278	\$155	\$147	\$88	\$146	\$62	\$1,208

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-16-368

^aAccording to Department of Defense (DOD) officials, the amount of funding DOD originally allocated for projects represented the estimated cost of the projects as notified to Congress. Amounts reallocated were available for obligation for other authorized uses until the end of the relevant fiscal year. As contracts conclude, disbursement amounts are revised to reflect final contract costs. Figures in the table may not sum precisely because of rounding.

^bAccording to DOD, unliquidated obligations from fiscal years 2009 and 2010 have been cancelled and were returned to the Department of the Treasury.

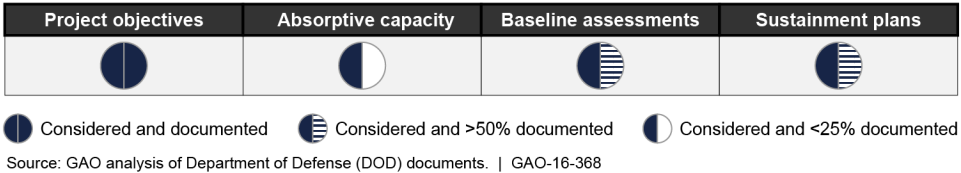
^cIncludes \$175 million from the European Reassurance Initiative and \$181 million from the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund.

¹¹Traditionally, resources for program activities have been provided through funds appropriated from DOD's Operation and Maintenance (O&M) account. O&M funds must be obligated by the end of the fiscal year in which they are appropriated. In fiscal year 2015, funds from the CTPF and ERI accounts were also obligated for Global Train and Equip projects. The authorizations for the CTPF and ERI accounts require that CTPF and ERI funds be transferred to the O&M account before they are available for obligation. Once CTPF funds are transferred from the CTPF account to the O&M account, they must be obligated by the end of the fiscal year in which they are appropriated or transferred back to the CTPF account. ERI funds were only available for obligation for one year, so must have been transferred to the O&M account and obligated by September 30, 2015. Following the period of availability for obligation, DOD has up to 5 years to disburse the obligated funds. As such, DOD must disburse fiscal year 2011 funds by September 30, 2016.

DOD and State Considered Four Key Security Assistance Elements While Planning Fiscal Year 2015 Projects but Consistently Documented Only One

DOD and State considered four key project planning elements called for by *Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance* (PPD 23) for fiscal year 2015 Global Train and Equip projects, but did not consistently document the consideration of those elements in proposal packages. PPD 23 states that U.S. agencies should target security sector assistance where it can be effective. To accomplish this goal, it identified key project planning elements to consider, including (1) project objectives that address partner nation needs, (2) partner nation absorptive capacity, (3) project assessments, and (4) project sustainment. While officials indicated that they considered each element, DOD consistently documented consideration for only one of those elements: project objectives. As seen in figure 4, documentation was incomplete for absorptive capacity, project baseline assessments, and project sustainment, despite officials’ indications that such factors were consistently considered during proposal development.

Figure 4: DOD’s Consideration and Documentation of Key Security Assistance Planning Elements for Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train and Equip Projects



DOD and State Considered Four Key Security Assistance Elements for Fiscal Year 2015 Projects

According to agency officials, DOD and State consistently considered four key security assistance elements for all fiscal year 2015 project proposals we reviewed. PPD 23 identified key project planning elements for the United States to consider, including project objectives, absorptive capacity, baseline assessments, and sustainment plans. SO/LIC officials said that all four elements were discussed by program stakeholders, including global combatant command and State officials, during the proposal review process, prior to project approval by the Secretary of Defense with concurrence from the Secretary of State. For example, SO/LIC officials told us that absorptive capacity is consistently discussed among stakeholders during the proposal review process. Specifically, they noted that combatant command officials reported on the absorptive capacity of the recipient units during the project review process but noted that the SO/LIC policy oversight office lacked the resources to independently confirm the information. Combatant command officials confirmed that they consider elements such as absorptive capacity in developing project proposal packages. For example, officials from the U.S. European Command explained that absorptive capacity is one topic that they address in planning discussions with host nation officials.

Officials from the U.S. Pacific Command noted that they have a well-established understanding of potential recipient unit absorptive capacity based on the persistent relationship between partner nation officials and U.S. officials imbedded with those units. Further, U.S. embassy officials who help draft project proposals also noted they can inform the consideration of potential recipient unit absorptive capacity, in part by considering the historic ability of potential recipient units to absorb previous assistance. DOD officials also told us that they consistently considered sustainment for fiscal year 2015 projects and State officials noted that they discuss project sustainment during proposal review and sometimes identify additional potential sources of sustainment funds for proposed projects. In addition, as a standard part of its proposal development process, DOD includes 2 years of spare parts to enable short-term sustainment, such as equipment maintenance, associated with program assistance. For example, in April 2015, we reported that project proposal templates since fiscal year 2011 indicated that each project should contain spare parts for 2 years of maintenance, and that proposal packages for fiscal year 2011 through 2014 projects for Yemen consistently included such spare parts.¹² In addition, officials from SO/LIC, State, and DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency told us that each project includes such short-term maintenance support.

Congressional notifications for agency-approved fiscal year 2015 projects, prepared subsequent to approval by the Secretary of Defense and concurrence by the Secretary of State, included information related to the four elements, as required, implying that those elements had been considered. The fiscal year 2015 NDAA requires congressional notifications for each project to include, among other requirements, information about project objectives; absorptive capacity; a framework to be used for project assessment; and arrangements, if any, for project sustainment. Congressional notifications for 41 agency-approved fiscal year 2015 projects were prepared following the passage of the fiscal year 2015 NDAA. Each of these 41 notifications included (1) information about project objectives; (2) a similar statement, noting that the partner nation "has been assessed as capable to absorb effectively and benefit from the

¹²We reported in April 2015 that projects for Yemen in fiscal years 2012 through 2014 (which accounted for approximately 20 percent of Global Train and Equip assistance over that time period) consistently included spare parts sufficient for 2 years. For more information, see GAO, *Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance*, [GAO-15-493](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 28, 2015).

assistance proposed via this program;" (3) a description of the assessment framework; and (4) a statement about arrangements for sustainment, such as "while [the partner nation] might provide some national funds to help sustain this capability, it is very likely that Foreign Military Financing (FMF) will also be required to support future year sustainment and training of this capability."

Fiscal Year 2015 Project Proposals Consistently Documented Consideration of Only One of Four Key Elements

While DOD officials told us that they considered each of four key elements highlighted in PPD 23, fiscal year 2015 Global Train and Equip project proposal packages did not always document consideration of baseline assessments and sustainment plans, and rarely did so for absorptive capacity. *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that internal control activities aimed at ensuring effective use of resources should be clearly documented, and that documentation should be readily available for examination.¹³ As noted in table 2, DOD fiscal year 2015 project proposal packages requested information about three of four key elements—project objectives, baseline assessments, and sustainment plans. However, despite agency guidance, such documentation was not always complete. Further, DOD did not specifically request information about absorptive capacity.

Table 2: DOD’s Request for and Documentation of Key Security Assistance Planning Elements in Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train and Equip Project Proposals

	Project objectives	Absorptive capacity	Baseline assessments	Sustainment plans
Documentation requested in proposal packages	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Extent to which requested information was included in proposal packages	54 of 54	10 ^a of 54	34 of 54	41 of 54

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents. | GAO-16-368

^aAlthough DOD did not specifically request information regarding absorptive capacity, 10 project proposal packages included some related information.

¹³GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

All Fiscal Year 2015 Project
Proposals Included
Documentation of
Consideration for Project
Objectives That Address
Partner Needs

DOD requested, and fiscal year 2015 project proposals consistently documented, information about project objectives. DOD, in its fiscal year 2015 project proposal template, requested information related to project objectives. Our review of fiscal year 2015 project proposals indicated that they consistently included such information. For example, one proposal stated that “[t]his proposal will enhance the [recipient unit’s] ability to clear and successfully navigate through routes that contain [improvised explosive devices] laid by [terrorists].” Another proposal stated that “[t]his program will allow the [partner nation] to establish at least 3 defensible forward operating bases and a mobile forward aircraft refueling point that will have the capability to provide fuel, water, and sustainment of critical supplies to patrols that are operating in the desolate parts of the country.”

Fiscal Year 2015 Project
Proposals Rarely Documented
Consideration of Absorptive
Capacity

DOD did not request, and project proposals did not consistently include, information about recipient units’ absorptive capacity. DOD’s fiscal year 2015 program guidance states that prior to proposal submission, embassy security cooperation officers are to ensure that proposals are appropriate for the partner nation’s absorptive capacity. However, DOD did not request officials to document their consideration of the recipient units’ absorptive capacity in fiscal year 2015 project proposal packages that agency officials used to make project approval decisions. Although the standard fiscal year 2015 project proposal template did not include a field specifically requesting such information, our review indicated that 10 of the 54 fiscal year 2015 project proposals did include information about the absorptive capacity of recipient units. For example, five proposals drafted by U.S. Africa Command stated that the partner nation’s “ability to absorb and sustain the training and equipment is well above average.” In addition, four projects to be funded through the ERI account were proposed using a template that had been modified to include a question specifically about the absorptive capacity of recipient units. The tenth proposal that included information about absorptive capacity did so in planning for equipment delivery. SO/LIC officials said that they plan to put additional focus on absorptive capacity during the proposal review process for fiscal year 2016 projects. However, the fiscal year 2016 project proposal template did not request any specific information regarding absorptive capacity, even though guidance for the program states that SO/LIC is interested in the absorptive capacity of the partner nation.

Without documentation of absorptive capacity considerations, decision makers may not have sufficient information about recipient units’ ability to integrate proposed assistance projects as they consider proposed projects. For example, in documents supporting its fiscal year 2013 report to Congress on its assessment of the results of selected projects, DOD

Fiscal Year 2015 Baseline
Assessments Inconsistently
Included Requested
Information

indicated that one partner nation recipient had a small armed force with few resources that had limited capability to absorb additional foreign military assistance.¹⁴ Despite having identified this challenge in an assessment completed during fiscal year 2013, DOD approved projects totaling more than \$21 million for the same partner nation in fiscal years 2014 and 2015. DOD's fiscal year 2015 project proposal package for this partner nation did not document any assessment of the recipient unit's absorptive capacity.

The project proposal packages submitted in response to DOD requests almost always included baseline assessment documents; however, those documents did not always include all information requested by DOD guidance. DOD's assessment framework is based on a dual-purpose document that includes portions for assessing the recipient unit's baseline capabilities and its capabilities following project delivery and implementation. DOD's fiscal year 2015 program guidance states that a baseline assessment of recipient unit capabilities should be completed prior to submission of each proposal. While 51 of the 54 fiscal year 2015 project proposal packages included baseline assessments as required, they did not consistently include all information requested by agency guidance. DOD's fiscal year 2015 guidance requests that geographic combatant command officials complete the baseline assessment section and the baseline portions of the project summary and certification sections of that document when projects are proposed. Program office officials said the baseline assessment section is the primary mechanism to document the capabilities of the recipient unit and identifies what the recipient unit is able to achieve at the time the project is proposed and what it needs to improve its capabilities to meet its mission. The baseline portion of the summary section provides an overview of the organizational status of the partner nation before project implementation, and the baseline assessment certification section requires the identification of the people involved in the preparation of the baseline assessment and their relevant experience. Thirty-four of the 51 baseline assessments we reviewed included completed baseline assessment sections. Only six (or 12 percent) of the 51 baseline portions of the summary and certification sections were complete.¹⁵ SO/LIC officials said they had not verified

¹⁴ Although this project assessment was undertaken in fiscal year 2013, the resulting report was not submitted to Congress until September 2015.

¹⁵ Two assessments included a completed baseline certification section, but left the baseline portion of the summary section blank.

completion of baseline assessments because the policy oversight office was not staffed to provide this level of oversight. DOD officials said that the policy oversight office had increased its staff and that they are working to improve oversight of the baseline assessment process. The baseline assessments are intended to be completed, submitted with project proposals, and later used for project outcome assessments by assessment teams, policy officials, embassy staff, and other stakeholders. Incomplete assessments may affect DOD's ability to design appropriate capacity building projects and to assess project outcomes, thus limiting information on program effectiveness that could help inform future assistance decisions.

About One Quarter of Fiscal Year 2015 Project Proposal Packages Lacked Complete Documentation of Sustainment Plans

DOD's fiscal year 2015 guidance requested information about planning for project sustainment; however, some aspects of sustainment planning are not consistently documented as requested by agency guidance. First, DOD's fiscal year 2015 program guidance instructed officials developing proposals to provide context for any decisions to forego planning for the sustainment of training or equipment to be provided and to identify, if possible, the expected lifespan of the equipment if it will be used in a combat setting. Only one fiscal year 2015 project proposal included specific information about the applicability of project sustainment or the expected lifespan of the equipment in question. Nevertheless, several State and DOD officials told us that not all projects require or warrant sustainment. For example, officials explained that some assistance, such as ammunition, is expendable and does not require sustainment. Others noted that some assistance was never intended to be sustained. For instance, a project may have a discrete objective, such as enabling partner nation security forces to deploy in support of the International Security Assistance Force - Afghanistan. If the security forces had been deployed, then the return on investment would have been realized and long-term sustainment would be unnecessary. Officials explained that there was no process to substantively analyze the value of long-term project sustainment.

Second, the fiscal year 2015 project proposal template requests information about (1) partner nation contributions, (2) partner nation sustainment capability, and (3) estimates of annual sustainment costs. The proposals we reviewed consistently included information regarding the first two items: partner nation contributions and sustainment capability. For example, 47 of 54 proposals indicated that the recipient partner nation may be able to contribute national funds for project sustainment, although State and DOD officials identified several reasons why they do not have full confidence in sustainment plans predicated on the availability of partner nation funds. With respect to the third category

of information requested in project proposals, only 37 of 54 proposals included an estimate of annual sustainment costs as required. These 37 annual sustainment cost estimates ranged from \$20,000 to sustain a \$3 million project to develop the skills of a special operations force of a European partner nation, to more than \$5 million to sustain a project building a counterterrorism company in an African partner nation. Four additional proposals indicated that sustainment costs would be “minimal” but did not include a specific estimate. The remaining 13 proposals did not include sustainment cost estimates. As seen in figure 2 above, fiscal year 2015 allocations for activities to be implemented under the authority increased significantly over past years. Clearly documenting information such as estimates of annual sustainment costs could help improve decision makers’ ability to assess the sustainability of proposed projects in making funding decisions. See appendix III for State and DOD views on the availability of funds for long-term sustainment.

DOD Reporting on Project Assessments Has Not Met Statutory Deadlines but Indicates Some Progress in Building Foreign Partner Capacity

DOD reporting to Congress on the achievement of Global Train and Equip project objectives has not met reporting deadlines, but those reports—dating back to 2012—indicate that projects have made some progress building partner capacity to combat terrorism and conduct stability operations. The fiscal year 2013 assessment report was submitted to Congress nearly 2 years after the required due date, the fiscal year 2014 assessment report was submitted to Congress nearly 1 year later than required, and the fiscal year 2015 report was 1 month late. DOD’s fiscal year 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 reports included assessments of the recipient units of 61 of the 208 projects implemented in fiscal years 2006 through 2013, which represents 28 percent of the \$2 billion in assistance implemented in those fiscal years. These assessments and supporting documents indicate that recipient units generally experienced progress in building capabilities. They also identified several factors—including proposal design, equipment procurement, partner nation shortfalls, and workforce management—that can affect the extent to which DOD is able to achieve project objectives. Assessments, if completed in a timely manner, could help provide valuable information to decision makers and policymakers as they seek to choose new projects and address reported challenges.

Fiscal Year 2013, 2014, and 2015 Assessment Reports to Congress Were Late

DOD’s fiscal year 2013, 2014, and 2015 assessments reports were submitted to Congress late. The fiscal year 2012 NDAA required DOD, no later than 90 days after the end of each fiscal year, to submit to Congress a report including, in part, an assessment of the effectiveness of each program in building the capacity of the foreign country to conduct

counterterrorism operations during the fiscal year covered by such report. The fiscal year 2015 NDAA, enacted in December 2014, included a similar requirement for DOD to submit a report to Congress no later than 90 days after the end of each fiscal year, from 2015 through 2020, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the program in achieving its intended purpose.¹⁶ This report is to summarize the findings of the assessments of projects carried out under the program. DOD's annual reports for fiscal years 2012, 2013, and 2014 described some assessment activities and the relevant assessment framework but noted that reporting on the results of assessment activities would be submitted to Congress separately. As shown in table 3, DOD submitted its fiscal year 2012 assessment report in accordance with required deadlines. However, DOD submitted its fiscal year 2013 assessment report to Congress in September 2015, 21 months later than required, and submitted its fiscal year 2014 assessment report to Congress in December 2015, 12 months later than required. DOD's assessment report for fiscal year 2015 was 1 month late.

Table 3: Timeliness of DOD's Global Train and Equip Assessment Report Submissions to Congress

Assessment report fiscal year	Assessment due date	Date of DOD's submission to Congress	Timeliness of DOD's reporting
2012	December 29, 2012	December 2012	On time
2013	December 29, 2013	September 2015	21 months late
2014	December 29, 2014	December 2015	12 months late
2015	December 29, 2015	January 2016	1 month late

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents. | GAO-16-368

DOD officials informed us that, although the assessment teams had conducted the assessments during the associated fiscal year, DOD did not submit those assessments to Congress on time because they did not have sufficient resources to review and finalize them. According to DOD, the assessment process is intended to enable the U.S. government to make better decisions about project design and the types of projects that promise the greatest return on investment, that accomplish counterterrorism or stability operation missions, and that are likely to help recipient partner nations achieve the intended standards of capability and

¹⁶Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1205(e)(1), Dec. 19, 2014.

performance. Because the submissions to Congress were late, decision makers lacked full and current information about the extent to which projects achieved their objectives, which could have informed the direction of assistance—for both new projects and sustainment of previous efforts—in subsequent years. Further, program stakeholders were not afforded the opportunity to use lessons learned documented in those reports in designing related or similar projects. Officials from State told us that they, too, might have used the information in the reports in considering subsequent project proposals and during development of Global Train and Equip and other security assistance efforts.

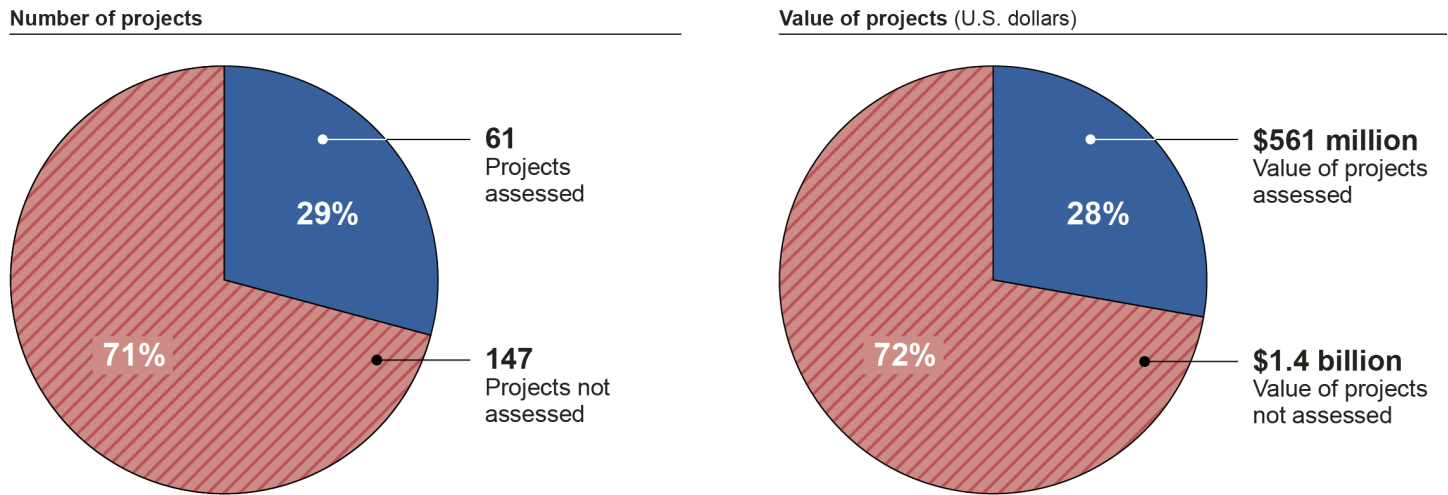
**DOD Reporting on
Assessed Projects
Indicates Some Progress
in Building Partner
Capacity**

DOD's reporting on the achievement of project objectives indicates some progress in enhancing recipient unit capabilities. As shown in figure 5, DOD's fiscal year 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 assessment reports covered 61, or 29 percent, of the 208 projects implemented between 2006 and 2013.¹⁷ These 61 projects account for 28 percent of the \$2 billion DOD allocated for this program in those years.¹⁸

¹⁷We did not include fiscal year 2014 and 2015 projects in this analysis because DOD had not completed assessments of projects only recently implemented.

¹⁸In addition to the 61 projects DOD included in its fiscal year 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 reports, DOD planned and attempted to conduct assessments of the recipient units of seven additional projects but was unable to do so because of limited access to the recipient unit by the host government. For instance, the fiscal year 2012 report indicated that partner nation authorities in two countries were unwilling to allow DOD's assessment team access to certain recipient units, making it impossible for DOD to conduct assessments of the recipients of 3 of the 12 projects they planned to include.

Figure 5: Fiscal Year 2006-2013 Global Train and Equip Projects and Allocations Included in DOD's Fiscal Year 2012-2015 Assessment Reports



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-16-368

To conduct these assessments, DOD uses a standard framework for evaluating the capabilities and performance of each recipient unit. Baseline assessments, discussed earlier, rate the recipient unit's level of capability and performance before project implementation on a 5-point scale on which 1 is defined as the ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance and 5 is defined as the ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit's missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its assigned area of operations. Following implementation, DOD conducts assessments using the same 5-point scale to report on changes in the recipient unit's level of capability and performance. Comparing the change in a recipient unit's capability and performance rating between the baseline and post-implementation assessments indicates the recipient unit's positive, neutral, or negative change since the provision of assistance. According to a DOD contractor who leads the project assessments, these ratings do not solely represent the effect of the provision of training and equipment on the recipient unit's capability and performance, as other factors may contribute to the change in performance level. DOD implemented its Global Train and Equip assessment framework in fiscal year 2012 and baseline assessments became a requirement of project proposals in fiscal year 2013. Projects proposed and implemented in earlier years were not required to have a baseline assessment at the time of proposal. However, for the purpose of assessing changes in recipient unit capacity, DOD established

hypothetical baseline ratings for some recipient units by inquiring about those units' capabilities prior to receipt of assistance.¹⁹

Of the 61 projects assessed, 18 were for recipient units for which DOD had not conducted or established a hypothetical assessment of baseline capabilities. The remaining 43 projects, representing 21 percent of the 208 projects implemented in fiscal years 2006 through 2013, were for recipient units for which DOD conducted both an assessment of baseline capabilities and capabilities following project implementation. As shown in figure 6, of these 43 projects, the recipient units of 35 were assessed as having increased by at least one rating level—most often from level 1 to 2 or from level 2 to 3—following project implementation. For seven of those 35 projects, DOD reported that recipient unit capabilities increased by at least two levels. For example, DOD's fiscal year 2012 assessment report noted that a project implemented in fiscal year 2010 intended to build partner nation air force capacity to execute precision-guided strikes against terrorist targets indicated that the recipient unit's new capabilities enabled strikes on a terrorist target that diminished terrorists' capacity to plan attacks. The remaining eight projects were directed to recipient units assessed as having realized no change in capability. For example, one of these four projects was intended to bolster a partner nation force's ability to enable sustained border security operations. At the time of the assessment, the recipient unit was using assistance for pre-deployment activities rather than to conduct envisioned border operations.

¹⁹The DOD contractor who leads the project assessments indicated that officials conducting assessments were not able to gain sufficient insight into several units' pre-delivery capability level and therefore no baseline assessment rating was reported. In other cases, the recipient units did not exist prior to receipt of the equipment and training.

Figure 6: Changes in Recipient Unit Capability Levels Reported in DOD's Fiscal Year 2012-2015 Global Train and Equip Project Assessments (Part 1)

Fiscal year assessed	Project	Change in recipient unit capability level				
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
2012	2007 - UH-1H Helicopter Upgrades		● ■			
2012	2007 - Maritime Security Training and Equipment		● ■			
2012	2008 - Border Control Interdiction Force		● ■			
2012	2008 - Coastal Surveillance Stations	● ■				
2012	2009 - Coast Watch South Radars with Command and Control for Eastern Mindanao	● ■				
2012	2010 - Close Air Support Capability		● ■			
2012	2010 - Supporting International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)		● ■			
2012	2007 - Regional Maritime Awareness Capability	● ■				
2012	2010 - Regional Maritime Awareness Counterterrorism Capability	● ■				
2012	2009 - Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Counterterrorism Capability		● ■			
2012	2010 - Aerial ISR for Polish Special Operations Force (SOF)			● ■		
2013	2008 - Maritime Patrol and Interdiction Initiative					
2013	2009 - Naval Special Forces Counterterrorism Capability	● ■				
2013	2010 - Maritime Counterterrorism Package					
2013	2009 - Armed Caravan		● ■			
2013	2008 - Train and Equip SOF ^a					
2013	2008 - Secure Communications for SOF ^b		● ■			
2013	2009 - Military Operations in Urban Terrain ^c					
2013	2008 - Train and Equip SOF ^a					
2013	2008 - Secure Communications for SOF ^b		● ■			
2013	2009 - Military Operations in Urban Terrain ^c					
2013	2008 - Train and Equip SOF ^a					
2013	2008 - Secure Communications for SOF ^b		● ■			
2013	2009 - Military Operations in Urban Terrain ^c					
2013	2010 - Logistics Counterterrorism Support Package		● ■			

- Legend: ● Represents the recipient unit's baseline capability and performance rating
 ■ Represents the recipient unit's post-implementation capability and performance rating
 Represents the change in the recipient unit's capability and performance rating between the baseline and post-implementation assessments
- Level 1** The ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance
- Level 5** The ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit's missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its assigned area of operations

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents. | GAO-16-368 Part 1 of 2.

Note:

^aThis project is shared amongst three recipient units.

^bThis project is shared amongst three recipient units.

^cThis project is shared amongst three recipient units.

Figure 7: Changes in Recipient Unit Capability Levels Reported in DOD's Fiscal Year 2012-2015 Global Train and Equip Project Assessments (Part 2)

Fiscal year assessed	Project	Change in recipient unit capability level				
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
2014	2010 - Supporting ISAF- Afghanistan			● ■		
2014	2011 - Joint Terminal Attack Control Capability for ISAF			● ■		
2014	2012 - Joint Terminal Attack Control Capability for ISAF			● ■		
2014	2006 - Maritime Security Initiative	●	■			
2014	2008 - Western Fleet Command and Control Center	●	■			
2014	2007 - Coastal Surveillance System	●	■			
2014	2007 - Eastern Fleet Regional Command Center	●	■			
2014	2007 - Maritime Domain Awareness Support to Eastern Fleet Ships	●	■			
2014	2008 - Coastal Surveillance Stations	●	■			
2014	2010 - Maritime SOF Counterterrorism Package		●	■		
2014	2011 - Air Cavalry Enhancement	●	■			
2015	2009 - Coastal Surveillance System Upgrade	●	■			
2015	2007 - Maritime Domain Awareness Support to Eyes in the Sky		●	■		
2015	2007 - Eastern Sabah Maritime Domain Awareness Radars		●	■		
2015	2007 - CENTRIX Systems		●	■		
2015	2008 - Maritime Domain Awareness Package	●	■			
2015	2008 - C2 Center for the Joint Forces Headquarters Sabah	●	■			
2015	2011 - Radar Installation	●	■			
2015	2008 - Maritime Interdiction Package	●	■			
2015	2009 - Coast Watch South Intelligence-Operations Communications Counterterrorism Capability		● ■			
2015	2012 - Insertion and Extraction Capability			● ■		
2015	2008 - Suppressing Cross-Border Terrorist Activity			● ■		
2015	2011 - ISR for Border Security Enhancement			● ■		
2015	2012 - Maritime Security Capability		●	■		

Legend: ● Represents the recipient unit's baseline capability and performance rating
 ■ Represents the recipient unit's post-implementation capability and performance rating
 Represents the change in the recipient unit's capability and performance rating between the baseline and post-implementation assessments

Level 1 The ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance
Level 5 The ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit's missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its assigned area of operations

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents. | GAO-16-368 Part 2 of 2.

Note:
^aThis project is shared amongst three recipient units.
^bThis project is shared amongst three recipient units.
^cThis project is shared amongst three recipient units.

DOD's assessment reports and supporting documents, as well as agency officials we interviewed, also described some factors that can affect the extent to which DOD is able to achieve Global Train and Equip project objectives, including proposal design and interpretation, equipment delivery and procurement, partner nation shortfalls, and workforce management.

- **Proposal design and interpretation.** Project proposal designs that did not adequately capture recipient unit needs and capabilities challenged the achievement of project objectives. For example, DOD's fiscal year 2013 assessment of a fiscal year 2011 project indicated that the design of a light ballistic protection system for partner nation helicopters did not take into consideration the location of navigation lights and associated inspection and maintenance procedures. The assessment suggested that communication and design collaboration between the United States and the partner nation could have identified and eliminated this issue. The assessment also indicated that changes to the aircraft had to be certified by the original equipment manufacturer per an agreement between the partner nation and the Russian government. Since the changes had not been approved by the Russian authorities, the aircraft were not permitted to fly with troops. DOD's assessment described this as a critical shortcoming. In addition, DOD's fiscal year 2013 assessment of a fiscal year 2011 counterterrorism project indicated that several elements were not well designed. For instance, some vehicles provided were considered unsuitable for use in the terrain in which they would be used and did not have an identified need or associated concept of operations. As pictured in figure 7, this same assessment reported that spotting scopes provided to enhance counterterrorism capabilities were too tall for use in a prone position, exposing the spotter.

Figure 8: Height of Spotter Scopes Provided with Global Train and Equip Program Assistance Exposes Spotter



Source: Department of Defense. | GAO-16-368

Combatant command officials indicated that project proposals are at times developed by individuals who lack subject matter expertise. Unclear descriptions of desired capabilities in proposal documents may make it difficult for project implementers and officials conducting assessments to interpret the intent of the proposals. Further, DOD officials indicated that because of institutionalized staff turnover in U.S. embassies, the officials overseeing project implementation may not have been responsible for project development and are less likely to understand the capabilities of the intended recipient units or the capability gaps that could be addressed by equipment and training.

- **Equipment delivery and procurement.** Equipment delivery and procurement challenges can make it difficult to achieve desired capability-building objectives. For example, DOD's fiscal year 2013 assessment report indicated that 7 of the 11 recipient units assessed experienced equipment procurement and delivery issues. The majority of projects provided to these recipients indicated discrepancies between the number of items requested in

congressional notifications and the number of items delivered. For instance, a fiscal year 2013 assessment of a fiscal year 2009 project to equip the recipient unit to conduct counterterrorism operations in urban settings reported that the unit received half the desired number of body armor sets, one additional bulldozer, and 10 fewer night vision rifle scopes than originally proposed. The report indicated that it was unclear how the bulldozers were being employed in tactical operations. In addition, incorrect equipment was delivered to some partner nations. For example, one fiscal year 2013 project assessment indicated that a recipient unit received left-hand drive vehicles despite project plans for right-hand drive vehicles. Similarly, a fiscal year 2012 assessment of a fiscal year 2009 project to bolster the recipient unit's aerial interdiction operations found that the incorrect surveillance equipment was delivered to the recipient unit. When the cockpit surveillance monitors were installed, the equipment was in the pilot's line of sight, rendering the equipment unusable per original project design.

- **Partner nation shortfalls.** Shortfalls of partner nations, including their use of assistance for purposes other than those originally envisioned and inability to maintain and sustain equipment, can negatively affect the achievement of project objectives. For example, the fiscal year 2013 assessments and supporting documentation of fiscal year 2008 and 2009 projects to train and equip a partner nation counterterrorism unit indicated that the recipient unit had not been assigned to conduct counterterrorism operations as envisioned. In this instance, although the recipient unit, at the time of congressional notification, was intended to conduct urban counterterrorism operations, the assessment team found that the recipient unit had subsequently been assigned to execute urban internal defense operations. Nonetheless, DOD's assessment indicated that the recipient units were more capable of conducting internal defense and counterterrorism operations. In addition, DOD's fiscal year 2012 assessment of a fiscal year 2010 project to enhance maritime domain awareness found that a recipient unit's inability to maintain related equipment limited operational performance. The recipient unit reportedly had difficulty recruiting and training personnel to operate and maintain the equipment, and also lacked spare parts. Similarly, DOD's fiscal year 2012 assessment and supporting documentation of a fiscal year 2008 project intended to provide coastal radar surveillance noted that the delivered equipment and training might have helped the recipient unit earn a level 3 or 4 capability and performance rating, but maintenance and sustainment issues reduced its rating to level 2—an increase of only one level over its baseline assessment.

-
- **Workforce management.** DOD officials indicated that workforce challenges, particularly related to turnover and staffing levels, inhibit effective project design, program implementation, and oversight. They noted that workforce turnover within the policy oversight office was systemic and that program oversight responsibilities historically entail more work than available personnel can manage. DOD officials indicated that they increased office staff by three permanent positions in fiscal year 2015. According to SO/LIC officials, as of February 2016, the policy oversight office had six permanent employees—four civilians and two military—who provide oversight of Global Train and Equip and other DOD counterterrorism partnership program activities. In addition, other non-permanent staff and temporary detailees are sometimes assigned to help oversee the program’s key functions. In addition, DOD officials indicated that, for several projects, the associated embassy’s security cooperation office responsible for implementing projects in-country had staffing limitations that affected their ability to supervise project delivery and implementation, maintain equipment delivery records, and gauge the recipient units’ implementation of the projects. Further, a U.S. Africa Command official stated that combatant command and policy oversight office staffing challenges inhibit effective proposal development, implementation, oversight, and sustainment of projects.

Conclusions

Building partner capacity is a central focus of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy, as underscored by the allocation of \$675 million for Global Train and Equip program activities in fiscal year 2015—a sharp increase compared to the \$275 million annual average in the preceding 6 years. Although DOD has established a methodical interagency process to develop and select security assistance project proposals that considers key security sector assistance planning elements, it did not require documentation of recipient unit absorptive capacity or fully document support for consideration of other key elements in planning fiscal year 2015 projects. Fully documenting the basis of project approval decisions could enhance transparency, provide additional assurance that resources are efficiently allocated, and help to ensure the long-term benefits of projects and careful use of scarce U.S. and partner nation resources. In addition, DOD has not consistently fulfilled its congressional reporting requirements for the program in a timely manner. DOD’s fiscal year 2013, 2014, and 2015 assessment reports were late. Without DOD’s timely fulfillment of its assessment reporting requirements, Congress may not have comprehensive and current information about past successes and failures that could help ensure that U.S. resources are effectively used to build partner capacity to combat terrorists.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve management of and reporting on the Global Train and Equip program, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following three actions:

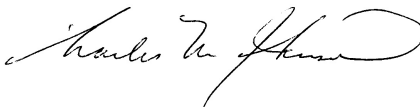
- take steps to require that information about the absorptive capacity of recipient units be documented in project proposal packages,
- take steps to ensure that documentation requested in project proposal packages is complete, and
- take steps to develop a process for improving the timely completion and submission of required assessment reports to Congress.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DOD and State for comment. DOD provided written comments concurring with all of our recommendations, which we have reprinted in appendix IV. State had no comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and the Secretaries of Defense and State. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7331 or JohnsonCM@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix VI.



Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.
Director, International Affairs and Trade

List of Committees

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed
Services United States Senate

The Honorable Bob Corker
Chairman
The Honorable Benjamin Cardin
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
The Honorable Richard Durbin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Edward Royce
Chairman
The Honorable Eliot Engel
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015, requires GAO to conduct biennial audits of such program or programs conducted or supported pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2282 during the preceding 2 fiscal years as GAO shall select, including in these reports (1) a description of the program(s), (2) an assessment of the capacity of recipient countries to absorb assistance, (3) an assessment of the arrangements, if any, for the sustainment of the program(s), (4) an assessment of the effectiveness of the program(s) in achieving their intended purpose, and (5) such other matters as GAO considers appropriate.¹ This report examines (1) the extent to which the Department of Defense (DOD) considered and documented consideration of key security assistance planning elements for fiscal year 2015 project proposals and (2) the results that have been reported on the achievement of project objectives since fiscal year 2009.

We assessed funding data including allocations, obligations, and disbursements for fiscal years 2009 through 2015. DOD provided data on allocations, amounts reallocated, unobligated balances, unliquidated obligations, and disbursements of funds for program activities. We analyzed these data to determine the extent to which funds had been disbursed. We assessed the reliability of these data by interviewing cognizant agency officials and comparing the data with previously published data, as well as verifying them with congressional notifications. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

To address these objectives, we analyzed program guidelines, project proposal documents, and congressional notifications. We discussed topics regarding the project proposal process and key elements of project planning, project documentation, and project assessment with officials from the Department of State (State) and DOD, geographic combatant commands in whose areas of responsibility partner nations received fiscal year 2015 assistance, and three selected U.S. embassies in Kenya, Jordan, and Latvia. We selected these countries based on factors such as the amount of funds the countries have been allocated, the maturity of projects, project assessment experience, and geographic distribution.

To assess the extent to which DOD considered and documented consideration of key elements of security sector assistance for projects it

¹This report is the result of the first phase of this review. Future reviews under this mandate may focus on a case study country or countries.

planned to implement in fiscal year 2015, we analyzed agency documents and interviewed agency officials. We reviewed *Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance* (PPD 23), which identified four key elements to be considered for security sector assistance programs: (1) project objectives that address partner needs, (2) the absorptive capacity of the recipient unit, (3) the baseline capabilities of the recipient unit, and (4) the arrangements for the sustainment of the project. To determine the extent to which DOD considered these elements, we interviewed State and DOD officials who develop and review proposals to discuss (1) how they use information included in project proposal packages to consider key planning elements and (2) other factors they consider in developing and reviewing proposals that may not be documented. Further, we reviewed congressional notifications SO/LIC develops subsequent to agency approval to determine the extent to which those documents include—and thus imply consideration of—information about the four key planning elements. To determine the extent to which DOD requested documentation about and fully documented consideration of these elements, we analyzed the agency guidance and the content of agency-approved fiscal year 2015 project proposals for their inclusion. DOD’s fiscal year 2015 program guidance states each project proposal package should include four documents: a completed standardized project proposal, a baseline assessment of the capabilities of the recipient unit, a proposed equipment list for the project, and a Chief of Mission concurrence letter. DOD guidance also requires a country team assessment for projects involving night vision devices or other sensitive technology. Each project proposal package was independently reviewed by two analysts for the inclusion of the four elements. The analysts resolved any disagreements through discussion of the information used to make their independent determinations. We ultimately reported on information included in 54 fiscal year 2015 project proposal packages. We excluded proposals for four fiscal year 2015 projects that redirected assistance originally approved and procured for Yemen in previous fiscal years but which could not be delivered because of political unrest.

With respect to our reporting on support for information about baseline assessments, congressional notifications lay out a standardized assessment framework to be used to assess the effects of projects. This framework includes a baseline assessment that DOD requires to be completed for inclusion in project proposal packages. DOD provided baseline assessments for 51 of 54 fiscal year 2015 project proposals notified to Congress. We analyzed these 51 baseline assessment documents included in fiscal year 2015 project proposal packages against DOD internal guidance to assess the completion of the required baseline assessment sections.

We also analyzed congressional notifications for projects DOD planned to implement in fiscal year 2015 to assess the extent to which they included required information related to the four key planning elements and with respect to requirements included in the fiscal year 2015 NDAA. Each congressional notification was independently reviewed by two analysts for the inclusion of eight required elements. The analysts resolved any disagreements through discussion of the information used to make their independent determinations. We ultimately reported on information included in congressional notifications for 41 fiscal year 2015 projects that were subject to the requirements in the fiscal year 2015 NDAA. For this analysis, we did not include the congressional notifications for 4 projects that redirected assistance originally approved and procured for Yemen in previous fiscal years but which could not be delivered because political unrest. Because these projects were planned in prior fiscal years, they were subject to different legislative and agency guidance. We also did not include 13 agency-approved project notifications to Congress submitted before the December 2015 passage of the fiscal year 2015 NDAA because these were not subject to the new requirements.

To assess the extent to which DOD has reported on the achievement of project objectives since fiscal year 2009, we reviewed agency documents and interviewed agency officials. In particular, we analyzed DOD's four annual project assessment reports and supporting documents from fiscal years 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 as well as the assessment framework handbook. We analyzed DOD project implementation and funding data to determine the number and value of implemented projects that DOD had assessed between fiscal years 2006 and 2013. We also analyzed submission dates for each assessment report against deadlines identified in the fiscal year 2012 NDAA. Further, to examine the extent to which DOD's assessments and supporting documents reported progress in building partner capacity, we compared original baseline recipient unit capability and performance levels assessed at the time projects were proposed with recipient unit capability levels assessed following the delivery of program assistance. DOD uses a standard framework for evaluating the capabilities and performance of each recipient unit. DOD implemented its assessment framework for the Global Train and Equip program in fiscal year 2012, and baseline assessments became a requirement of project proposals in fiscal year 2013. Baseline assessments rate the recipient unit's level of capability and performance before project implementation on a 5-point scale, with 1 defined as the ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance and 5 as the ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit's missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its

assigned area of operations. Following implementation, project assessments and supporting documents use the same framework to report on changes in the recipient unit's level of capability and performance on the same 5-point scale. Projects proposed and implemented in earlier years were not required to have a baseline assessment at the time of proposal. However, for the purpose of assessing changes in capacity, DOD established hypothetical baseline ratings of some recipient units by inquiring about those units' capabilities prior to receipt of program assistance.² Following implementation, project assessments and supporting documents use the same framework to report on changes in the recipient unit's level of capability and performance on the same 5-point scale. DOD's fiscal year 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 reports included assessments of the recipient units of 61, or 29 percent, of the 208 projects implemented in fiscal years 2006 through 2013. Of these 61 project assessments we reviewed, 43 were directed to recipient units where DOD had conducted both an assessment of recipient unit's baseline capabilities and the recipient unit's capabilities following project implementation. Assessing the change in a recipient unit's capability and performance rating between the baseline and post-implementation assessments indicates the recipient unit's positive, neutral, or negative change since the provision of assistance. To determine that the data included in DOD's assessments were sufficiently reliable for our purposes of reporting on those assessments, we met with DOD and contracted officials responsible for conducting and reviewing project assessments to gather information about their processes for assessing recipient unit capabilities. We also reviewed the qualifications and experience of the officials conducting the project assessments, which included military experience that was relevant to the project and recipient units being assessed. In addition, we reviewed DOD's project assessment guidance and their template for conducting project assessments, which was consistently used in the assessments we reviewed. Further, the preponderance of project assessments resulting in modest increases in recipient unit capabilities lends credibility to the assessment process. For example, our review of DOD's project assessments indicated that the majority of the recipient units' capability levels increased from level 1 to 2, or from level 2 to 3 following project

²The DOD contractor who leads the project assessments indicated that officials conducting assessments were not able to gain sufficient insight into those units' pre-delivery capability and performance and therefore no baseline assessment level was provided. In other cases, the recipient units did not exist prior to receipt of the equipment and training.

implementation. None of the recipient units' capability levels were assessed as having increased to level 5 following project implementation. We did not conduct independent assessments to systematically validate results included in DOD's reports. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

In addition, we reviewed the assessment reports to identify factors affecting the extent to which project objectives were achieved. We also gathered information about key factors affecting the extent to which project objectives were achieved from interviews with DOD officials responsible for implementing the program, including officials from DOD's policy guidance and oversight office, Joint Staff, and geographic combatant commands, and embassies in three selected countries, and with officials at State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and Africa Regional Bureau. We grouped the factors identified through our review of DOD's assessments and supporting documents, and conversations with agency officials into four categories of key factors on which we reported: (1) proposal design and interpretation, (2) equipment delivery and procurement, (3) partner nation shortfalls, and (4) workforce management.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2015 to April 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Allocation of Funds for Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train and Equip Projects

Combatant command	Recipient country	Project name	Funding source	Funding
U.S. Africa Command	Cameroon	Rapid Intervention Battalion	O&M	\$15,900,000
	Cameroon	[Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance] (ISR) Capability	O&M	\$14,900,000
	Chad	Special Anti-Terrorism Group Counterterrorism Company & Battalion Headquarters	O&M	\$10,970,000
	Djibouti	Logistics Company	O&M	\$9,090,000
	Ethiopia	Logistics Enhancement	CTPF	\$14,210,141
	Ethiopia	Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Response Unit	CTPF	\$4,466,470
	Ethiopia	Tactical Unmanned Aircraft	O&M	\$5,220,000
	Kenya	Ranger Regiment Support and Transport Company	CTPF	\$20,505,399
	Kenya	Engineer Company	CTPF	\$9,611,626
	Kenya	Intelligence Company	CTPF	\$1,322,926
	Kenya	Scan Eagle	O&M	\$13,560,000
	Kenya	RAVEN Unmanned Aerial System	O&M	\$4,280,000
	Kenya	[Counter] IED Enhancement	O&M	\$15,290,000
	Kenya	Ranger Regiment	O&M	\$15,160,000
	Niger	Airbase Security Company	O&M	\$6,120,000
	Niger	Logistics Support Company	O&M	\$10,410,000
	Niger	Forward Operating Location	O&M	\$4,950,000
	Somalia	Advanced Infantry Company	O&M	\$12,990,000
	Tunisia	[Ministry of Interior] Company Enhancement	CTPF	\$11,951,236
	Tunisia	Ground Special Forces Company	O&M	\$15,780,000
	Tunisia	Border Surveillance	O&M	\$16,280,000
	Tunisia	IED Response Unit	O&M	\$9,900,000
	Tunisia	Rotary Wing [Forward-Looking Infrared]	O&M	\$7,790,000
	Uganda	Enhanced Logistics Support	CTPF	\$8,902,847
	Uganda	[Elevated Persistent Surveillance System] Enhancement	CTPF	\$58,433
	Uganda	Special Forces Command	O&M	\$12,660,000
U.S. Central Command	Iraq	Comprehensive Training Program	O&M	\$6,164,000
	Jordan	Border Security	CTPF	\$46,802,042
	Jordan	Quick Response Force	CTPF	\$14,759,283
	Jordan	Operational Engagement Program	O&M	\$10,162,000
	Jordan	Fixed-Wing ISR	O&M	\$16,600,000
	Lebanon	Border Security	CTPF	\$48,338,039
	Lebanon	Unmanned Aerial System Capability	O&M	\$12,020,000
	Yemen	AT-802 ISR Enhancement	O&M	\$140,000

**Appendix II: Allocation of Funds
for Fiscal Year 2015 Global Train
and Equip Projects**

U.S. European Command	Bulgaria	[Resolute Support Mission] Pre-Deployment Training	O&M	\$2,360,000
	Estonia	--Classified Title--	ERI	\$33,085,000
	Estonia	Special Operations Force (SOF) Development	O&M	\$2,920,000
	Hungary	SOF Development	O&M	\$7,220,000
	Latvia	--Classified Title--	ERI	\$33,250,000
	Latvia	SOF and [Joint Terminal Attack Controllers] Capability	O&M	\$11,065,000
	Lithuania	--Classified Title--	ERI	\$33,060,000
	Lithuania	SOF Development	O&M	\$5,180,000
	Romania	[Resolute Support Mission] Pre-Deployment Training	O&M	\$18,550,000
	Ukraine	--Classified Title--	ERI	\$73,455,000
U.S. Pacific Command	Mongolia	[Resolute Support Mission] Pre-Deployment Training	O&M	\$680,000
	Philippines	Marine Special Operations Group	O&M	\$10,810,000
	Various	Transportation and Human Rights Training	Various	\$15,806,343
Total				\$674,705,785

Legend: O&M = Operation and Maintenance; CTPF = Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund; ERI = European Reassurance Initiative.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-16-368

Note: Projects included in this table are those implemented under the Global Train and Equip program as authorized by the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 and codified at 10 U.S.C § 2282. See Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1205(a)(1), 128 Stat. 3533, Dec. 19, 2014. The table includes three projects originally proposed for Yemen in previous years and redirected to other partner nations in fiscal year 2015 because fiscal year 2015 funds were allocated to modify projects as necessary for the new recipient nations. Projects proposed and notified to Congress but not funded in fiscal year 2015 are not included.

Appendix III: State and DOD Views on the Availability of Funds for Long-term Sustainment of Global Train and Equip Projects

DOD's fiscal year 2015 Global Train and Equip project proposal template did not request information about the sources of U.S. funds to be used for long-term sustainment. Nonetheless, all 54 project proposals identified at least one potential source of funds for sustainment purposes. The most often cited sources of funds identified in those statements were partner nation funds (47 of 54) and State's Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program (16 of 54).¹ As we have previously reported, DOD's fiscal year 2016 project proposal template requests information on the availability of FMF and other available U.S. resources if a partner nation is unlikely to cover the expected costs of maintenance.² State and DOD officials acknowledged that, regardless of the intentions documented in long-term sustainment plans for fiscal year 2015 projects, partner nation and State FMF funds—the two most commonly identified sources for long-term project sustainment—may not be available in future years.

First, State and DOD officials identified several reasons why they do not have full confidence in sustainment plans predicated on the availability of partner nation funds. Officials explained that long-term sustainment plans for projects were not always discussed with partner nation officials. Projects are not guaranteed for funding until after proposals have been submitted and approved. Sensitive to the potential challenges of raising the expectations of partner nation counterparts, U.S. officials do not always have direct discussions about long-term planning for projects that might not come to fruition. In instances where long-term sustainment planning is discussed with partner nation officials, partner nation behavior may not conform to DOD and State's plan. For example, embassy officials explained that their partner nation counterparts may indicate during planning discussions that they would sustain the equipment with national resources but then use those resources for other purposes because of unforeseen needs or changes in priorities. Furthermore, DOD and State officials added that the economic conditions of some recipients call into question the validity of long-term sustainment planning that relies

¹In addition to partner nation and FMF resources, some project proposal packages also identified State's Peacekeeping Operations account as a potential source of sustainment funds. Further, the United Nations Support Office for Somalia is a potential source of sustainment funds for some projects implemented for partner nations contributing troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia. Some project proposals identified multiple potential funding sources.

²GAO, *Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance*, [GAO-15-493](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 28, 2015).

on partner nation funds. For example, officials from both State and DOD noted that recipient partner nations in Africa (accounting for \$272 million of the \$675 million allocated in fiscal year 2015) do not likely have sufficient national funds available to sustain all approved projects.

Second, DOD and State officials acknowledge that FMF program resources may not be sufficient to carry out plans for long-term project sustainment. We have previously reported that FMF funds may not be available as planned for the sustainment of some projects.³ Agency officials noted that this longstanding concern has been compounded by the additional Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund resources obligated for the program in fiscal year 2015. Even if sufficient FMF funds are available, U.S. officials were uncertain about the extent to which some partner nations would use FMF resources for project sustainment. State provides FMF assistance to certain partner nations as grants and loans for the acquisition of U.S. defense equipment, services, and training. State and DOD officials can work with partner nations to develop a spending plan to include funding to sustain projects, but partner nations could prioritize the use of FMF resources for other purposes.

Officials from DOD's policy oversight office are aware of the sustainment challenges that the program and recipient partner nations face. They suggested that the ability to use funding made available for the program to sustain projects implemented in previous fiscal years could help address some such challenges. However, fiscal year 2012 congressional committee report language accompanying that year's NDAA notes that resources authorized for the program are not intended to fund long-term sustainment.⁴ DOD officials stated that they have drafted a legislative proposal that could modify this restriction. According those officials, as of February 2016, the proposal was undergoing interagency review in advance of being officially conveyed to Congress for consideration.

³GAO-15-493 and GAO, *International Security: DOD and State Need to Improve Sustainment Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation for Section 1206 and 1207 Assistance Programs*, GAO-10-431 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 15, 2010).

⁴S. Rep. 112-26, Jun. 22, 2011. In the committee report, the Senate Committee on Armed Services noted that "section 1206 authority is not intended to duplicate or substitute for other foreign military assistance authorities, nor to sustain previous section 1206 programs over multiple years."

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Defense



SPECIAL OPERATIONS /
LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

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MAR 16 2016

Mr. Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.
Director, International Affairs & Trade,
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Mr. Johnson,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-16-368, "COUNTERTERRORISM: DoD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program," dated February 29, 2015 (GAO Code 100108).

DoD concurs with recommendation one that information about recipient unit's absorptive capacity be documented in project proposal packages. The Department is reviewing staff enhancement options to facilitate improved partner absorptive capacity assessment and documentation.

DoD concurs with recommendation two that documentation requested in proposal packages be maintained to provide access for future reviews. The Department is reviewing options to increase oversight and management of the Global Train & Equip proposal development process.

DoD concurs with recommendation three that DoD should develop a process to improve the timely completion and submission of required assessment reports to Congress. The Department took steps in FY15 to increase manpower assigned to this task. As the report notes, the FY15 delay was reduced to 30 days.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on this draft report. Please direct any questions or comments you may have to Colonel Richard Carrell, at (703) 697-2989 and richard.a.carrell.mil@mail.mil.

Christopher Maier
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Special Operations and Combating Terrorism

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Jason Bair (Assistant Director), Kathryn Bolduc (Analyst-In-Charge), Mason Thorpe Calhoun, Christopher Hayes, Lynn Cothorn, Martin de Alteriis, and Ashley Alley made key contributions to this report. Oziel Trevino also provided technical assistance.

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